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Investigation Report

Missing Youth

Maple Ridge Wilderness Program

Ministry of Attorney General

Investigation, Inspection & Standards Office

February 28, 1996

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Attorney General, we have reviewed the adequacy of the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities. We have also reviewed the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program's compliance with the Standards and Guidelines as they apply to the Anvil Island wilderness expedition of January 26, 1996.

The Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities were developed by a multi-ministry committee to serve the Corrections Branch. They were published in November 1991. The Standards and Guidelines now need revision and expansion to cover all of the facets of wilderness expeditions and outdoor programs. The Standards and Guidelines should be re-written in simple language, clearly indicating where there is a standard with which compliance is expected. In those areas that have guidelines, the language should clearly indicate that there is some discretion available in the application of the guidelines.

The standards require strengthening in the areas of: standards for pre-trip planning and contingency planning; emergency food supplies; communications equipment and standards; and decision making criteria for winter programs. The Corrections Branch should also establish a policy to guide decision making about youths who are determined and repeatedly attempt to leave wilderness programs.

There are two separate sets of issues from the Anvil Island incident - the missing youth and the Anvil Island out-trip. We conclude that the youths who left the program were very determined to leave. They had previously left the program on two occasions, as recently as the Friday morning of the out-trip. One youth returned to the camp after trying to escape in the life raft. The second youth remains missing. The missing youth was prepared to leave to the extent of stealing money and food coupons, and packing an extra pair of pants. Maple Ridge Wilderness Program staff could do very little to prevent this youth from leaving the program, short of sending him home.

Youths attempting to leave an out-trip pose risks to themselves, the leaders and the other members of the out-trip. In this area, the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program tenaciously tries to retain youths on the program. Other contractors are less aggressive. There is no provincial policy to guide the wilderness contractors. We are recommending that the Corrections Branch develop provincial policy that will guide contractors in dealing with these risks.

In this report we have made several recommendations for improvements in the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program. Our comments and recommendations apply only to that program and should not be construed to apply to other wilderness contractors.

We conclude that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has become somewhat complacent about safety issues which has lead to a series of poor decisions about the Anvil Island out-trip. This complacency lead to a decision by the senior instructors to change the program without providing the necessary pre-trip canoe training to the youths, without orienting the instructor to emergency services on the island or significant characteristics of the life raft, and without checking the weather before embarking on the trip. As well, the Program assigned only one instructor to the group when the standards require a minimum of two instructors on out-trips.

In fairness to Maple Ridge Wilderness Program, there is evidence that the non-compliance with standards had tacit approval from the Corrections Branch up to the point of tendering the current contract. With a change in District Directors, this tacit approval was not specifically addressed at the time of the contract renewal. The April 1992 correspondence was not discussed at the time of the contract renewal. However, the District Director who negotiated the contract advised that he was very clear that the program was expected to comply with the standards. The current contract requires that the Program comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities.

Maple Ridge Wilderness Program did not provide notice of the incident to the Corrections Branch, or the parents of the youth, in a timely fashion.

We have made several recommendations for improvement in decision making, compliance with Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities, and safety procedures for the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program. Our detailed observations and recommendations are included in the body of this report.

Under very difficult circumstances, the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program instructor performed several heroic feats on Anvil Island. On two occasions, the instructor prevented the death of two youths. When the canoe capsized, the instructor ensured one youth was swimming to shore and towed the second youth to the shoreline. He then backpacked both youths up to the top of an embankment, as they were unable to climb on their own. On the embankment, he made sure both youths were not suffering from hypothermia, then ran back to camp and returned with dry clothes for them. Since they were too cold to dress themselves, he made sure that the youths got out of the wet clothing and into dry clothing and lead them back to camp. For these actions he should be commended.

We would like to thank the management and staff of Maple Ridge Wilderness Program and the Fraser Community District for their full cooperation and assistance.

A.H. Anderson
Director
Investigation, Inspection
& Standards Office

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program is designed for adolescent male youths between the age of 13 and 17 years old. The major objective of the program is to promote positive behavioral and emotional change. This goal is accomplished by removing the youth from the environment or situation wherein he is causing or experiencing difficulties, and placing him in a high activity wilderness-oriented program with an atmosphere that fosters improvement in attitude and behaviour.

The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program operates out of Porteau Cove Camp on Howe Sound. It is operated under contract with the Corrections Branch. The Program has had a long association with the Corrections Branch and is well respected by Probation Officers who have had success in referring youths to the Program. The Program has had successful contract evaluations over the last few years. The most recent contract is a five year contract ending March 31, 1999.

On the Residential Program, eight youths are supervised for periods of 42 consecutive days. The Program includes a blend of work programs and outdoor courses. The outdoor courses include native folklore, fire suppression, ropes and knots, wilderness survival, first aid, canoeing and hiking. These activities are designed as a vehicle for personal growth, good working skills, development of self-confidence, self esteem and interpersonal skills.

On the weekend program, Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has one senior instructor in camp in charge of all programs, and an instructor assigned to each group in camp. A group may be of mixed ages, and from different locations around the province. The maximum number in a group is eight youths, but as the program proceeds, the group size may be smaller due to withdrawal for a number of different reasons.

The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program started a group of seven youths on their 42 day wilderness program on January 15, 1996. In the group, there were two 13 year old youths and the remainder ranged in age up to 17 years old. During their 42 days the group would practice their hiking and campcraft on out-trips which are wilderness experiences. During these out-trips, the group would camp for several nights.

The senior instructors on the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program maintain a log of significant events. On Friday, January 26, 1996, the "seniors" log indicates that staff were awakened early by a telephone call from a Ministry of Transportation and Highways employee advising that there were two youths walking down the highway. The two 13 year old youths in the program had attempted to walk away from the program. They were intercepted and convinced to return to the program. This was the second time in the same week that the youths had left the program.

On this January 26th week-end, the seven youths were scheduled to undertake a three day out-trip. The instructor assigned to the outing was a part time employee who had been employed for approximately one and a half years and who only worked week-ends.

The instructor arrived at camp at one p.m. and participated in the weekly shift changeover meeting. Because two of the youths in the group had sore knees, and one youth had both a sore knee and a sore ankle, the wilderness hike was cancelled. The staff decided to take the youths on a week-end canoe out-trip to Anvil Island. Maple Ridge Wilderness Program had often used Anvil Island as a canoeing destination for summer programs. The instructor had previously been to Anvil Island during the summer on an in-house training course.

During the Friday afternoon, the instructor was briefed on the behavioral problems of one of the 13 year olds, and the attempted walkaways of both 13 year olds. The instructor was also advised that the youths may be conspiring to attempt another walkaway. The instructor decided to take the youths on the out-trip in the hope that the remoteness of Anvil Island would inhibit any escape attempt.

The youths packed their gear and had it inspected by both the instructor and the senior instructor in camp. The large Voyageur canoe (27 feet long) was taken to the water. A smaller canoe was also taken along to carry the youths' equipment and the supplies for the out-trip. The trip plan included food for the weekend plus two extra meals for each participant. The supplies for the out trip included a first aid kit, an emergency Dunlop-Beaufort life raft with a rated capacity of eight, a cellular telephone and spare batteries, and a marine flare. The life raft was stowed in front of the instructor, and the flare and cellular telephone were in the instructor's coat.

The youths packed both canoes, put on their life jackets and left Porteau Cove at approximately 6 p.m. The staff advise that there were clear skies, no wind and a calm sea at the time of departure. The trip to the Island would take approximately one hour.

The "seniors" log shows that the instructor telephoned the camp approximately one half hour after departure to advise that there were no problems and that he was approximately one third of the way to the Island. The instructor also telephoned later in the evening to advise that they had landed at Raccoon Bay on Anvil Island, set up camp successfully, and would check in again at 9 a.m. the following morning. The "seniors" log indicates that the later Friday night cellular telephone call was the last communication that the Porteau Cove Camp had with the group.

The instructor with the group on Anvil Island awakened very early on Saturday morning and noted that the two thirteen year old youths were talking. He arranged for one youth to sleep next to him, and the other on the far side of the tarp. He awakened later in the morning to find that there were high winds. At approximately 8 a.m., he re-awakened and noted that two of the youths were missing. He asked the rest of the group if they had seen the missing youths, and was advised that they were at the water's edge. He quickly dressed, and went to the water's edge to locate the youths. He noted that the boys were in the life raft just off shore. The instructor called to two of the older youths in the group to get dressed and come and help him. The instructor took two extra paddles, a life jacket and put the cellular telephone in his pocket. With the two older boys, the instructor paddled the sixteen foot canoe out to the life raft to try to convince the younger boys to return to camp.

The youths in the life raft refused life jackets and refused to return to the camp. The older boys in the canoe attempted to grab a rope on the raft and tow it to shore. The boys in the life raft swung paddles at the canoe preventing the boys in the canoe from grabbing the rope.

The wind was getting stronger and the waves higher. The instructor decided to return to camp. On the way to the shore, the instructor reviewed with the boys in the canoe the procedures to be followed if the canoe swamped. At this point, the canoe swamped and the instructor and two youths were in the ocean. One youth started to swim to shore, and the other panicked. The instructor was able to get behind the second youth and tow him to shore. On the way to shore, both youths lost their shoes. All three made it to shore.

On shore, the two youths were too cold and weak to climb the foreshore slope. The instructor carried the two youths to the top of the slope. One youth seemed to be okay but the second youth was succumbing to hypothermia. The instructor got both youths moving, told them what to do, and then ran back to camp to get help.

At the camp, the instructor called to one of the older youths to prepare two kits - changes of clothing and sleeping bags. The instructor changed his clothes, took one of the kits and asked the other youth to return with him to help the two youths from the canoe. They ran through the brush, and returned to where the youths from the canoe had been left. They helped the two youths change their clothes, and return to the camp. The instructor also discovered that the cellular telephone had become damaged from being in the ocean, and no longer worked. At the camp, they found one of the two youths from the life raft had returned to camp. The second youth from the life raft was exploring the island for a means to get off the island.

After ensuring the safety of the remaining six youths in the group, the instructor took some of the older youths and searched the area of the island where the life raft landed. The only sign of the missing youth was his whistle. After searching the section of the island all afternoon, the instructor and the youths returned to camp and prepared for the evening meal. After the evening meal, the instructor sat on the point with the flare, hoping to attract the attention of a passing boat. There was no boat traffic that evening.

The senior instructor in the Porteau Cove Camp had noted the lack of a telephone call from the Island, and had assumed that the group was still on the Island because of the high winds. The senior instructor had taken binoculars to a point on the mainland opposite the island to see if he could see members of the group on the island. Traditionally, the senior instructors do not become concerned until the group is overdue on their return time.

On Sunday morning after breakfast, the group again searched their area of the island for the missing youth. They found a cabin that had been entered. In the cabin they found some of the clothing from the missing youth, signs that food stores had been used, and the possibility that clothing had been exchanged. They again searched the immediate area without any success. They returned to the camp to see if the missing youth had gotten hungry and cold and had returned to the camp. There was no sign of the missing youth.

In the afternoon, the instructor and the youths packed their gear into the canoe and attempted to return to the mainland camp. However, the waves and winds were too high. The group returned to where they had made camp and prepared to wait for the weather to subside.

At dusk, the instructor stood on the point and tried to attract attention by lighting the flare. However, the flare malfunctioned and the instructor returned to camp and prepared the group for another evening.

Maple Ridge Wilderness Program does not have a shepherd boat. If they require a boat, they will, on occasion, rent one. However, on Sunday night the weather was too stormy to contemplate renting a boat.

Maple Ridge Wilderness Program requested assistance from the Coast Guard at approximately 4:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoon. The group was rescued by the Coast Guard at approximately 9:30 p.m. Sunday night and returned to Lions Bay. At Lions Bay, the group was interviewed by the press, and returned to camp for a hot meal and debriefing.

The Squamish Search and Rescue team was called out to search Anvil Island and the surrounding islands. The Squamish Search and Rescue team was augmented by volunteer staff of Maple Ridge Wilderness Program and by members of the North Shore Search and Rescue team. After thorough searches of Anvil Island and the surrounding islands, the youth is still listed as missing as of February 27, 1996.

3.0 SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

At the request of the Attorney General, we reviewed the adequacy and appropriateness of the Correction Branch's Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities.

We also reviewed Maple Ridge Wilderness Program's compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs. As part of the review, we interviewed six of the seven youths and the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program staff involved in the incident on the Anvil Island out-trip on Friday, January 26, 1996, through Sunday, January 28, 1996. We also interviewed Corrections Branch staff involved in negotiating the contract, interested parties and representatives of the Canadian Coast Guard.

Our observations and recommendations were discussed with the management of the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program and the management of the Corrections Branch during the period February 22 to 23, 1996.

4.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities

The Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities were issued in November 1991 after a lengthy development process. The standards were developed by the Corrections Branch in conjunction with representatives of four other ministries, and several recreation and outdoor activity associations.

The phrasing of the standards in some areas is permissive, and it is unclear that there is an expectation of compliance. For example, on page 71, the standard states that "... out-tripping leadership should provide for: - a minimum leader/participant ratio of 2:10, with no fewer than two leaders on any trip...".

In revising the standards, the Corrections Branch should ensure that the standards are phrased in a way that it is clear that there is an expectation of compliance. As well, the guidelines can be phrased in a manner so that it is clear that there is some discretion available to the contractor in this area.

The Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities require strengthening in the following areas:

- Some of the specific activities have a minimum age for the group leader, while others do not. However, the guidelines for outdoor activity, hiking and out-tripping, do not contain minimum age or experience levels for group leaders. The Branch should set minimum age standards for leaders;

- Several sections on activities categorize leadership requirements according to the age of participants. This causes interpretation difficulties in that wilderness programs may include a wide range of ages;

- Pre-trip planning section should contain a requirement for a contingency plan for communications. In this area, the Corrections Branch should consider a requirement for daily or twice a day communication with the base;

- For programs without base camps, the Branch should consider requiring alternate contingency procedures to ensure the safety of the group while on the outing;

- The Corrections Branch should establish a standard for communications equipment that considers regional disparities and establish guidelines for waterproofing the equipment;

- The pre-trip planning section should have a requirement for details of how the organization expects to recover the party in case of emergency;

- The Corrections Branch should establish a minimum standard for emergency food supplies. Some organizations carry up to four days extra food, others carry two extra meals per person. In establishing this standard, the Branch may wish to consider a seasonally adjusted standard;

- The qualifications for instructors/leaders should be amended to require summer survival courses for leaders for summer out-trips and winter survival courses for instructors/leaders for winter out-trips;

- The section on first aid requires improvement. The manual refers to courses that are no longer available and are not relevant to wilderness programs;

- The Corrections Branch should develop criteria for disciplinary action to be used by wilderness contractors. We suggest that there should be parallels between discipline in wilderness programs and the type of discipline administered in youth custody centres;

- The Corrections Branch should ensure that the information available to parents, guardians and youths about wilderness programs also includes advice that any complaints about the programs can be forwarded to the Investigation, Inspection & Standards Office or the Provincial Ombudsman Office for investigation;

- The community of contractors providing wilderness programs are dedicated to what they are doing and very enthusiastic. There seems to be a confidence in the training and equipment that leads some of the contractors to believe they can overcome the elements regardless of the weather. This appears to cause

them to proceed on wilderness experiences regardless of conditions. For this reason, and because the participants in wilderness programs may be less attentive and less motivated to comply with instructions than individuals who voluntarily take the courses, winter programs present additional risks to leaders and participants. The Corrections Branch should expand the standards and guidelines to include:

- a standard for minimum temperature conditions for out-trips where the risks involved outweigh any benefits to be gained from the trip;

- a minimum standard that addresses the combined effect of wind, temperature and altitude in posing unacceptable risks of frostbite. It should also limit out-trips to where the forecasted temperature is greater than the rated limits on the sleeping equipment;

- regular checks of hands, feet and faces where the combination of temperature and wind chill pose hazards to exposed flesh. We have reviewed literature that indicates that there is great hazard of frostbite in conditions such as 0° C with a 25 km/hr wind. In this area, the Branch may wish to establish criteria for checks every half hour or less in circumstances where exposed flesh may quickly freeze.

- The Corrections Branch may wish to develop criteria for using abundant caution for year round canoe open water crossings, or may wish to reduce the risk, and limit open water crossings to spring, summer and fall seasons. The Coast Guard strongly recommend that all canoe open water crossings have a shepherding boat nearby; and

- The Branch may wish to develop criteria for abundant caution while canoeing at night including open water crossings, or reduce the risk and limit night time canoeing to short expeditions close to shore.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Branch should review and revise the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities. In revising the standards, the Correction Branch should ensure that the language used clearly indicates where compliance is expected and where discretion can be applied. The revised standards should clearly discriminate between activities and out trips.

4.2 Youths Attempting to Leave the Program

Youths attend Wilderness Programs as an alternative to custody. The youth attends the program as a condition of Probation. In the early part of the Program, some youths try to walk away from the Program.

As a result of an unfortunate incident in 1990 on Vancouver Island, a Coroners Jury recommended that the Corrections Branch develop a standardized Absent Without Leave (AWOL) procedure for all wilderness and attendance programs. The Corrections Branch accepted the Coroners Jury's recommendation and drafted policy to strengthen the guidelines for Probation Officers. The Branch also developed draft clauses for their wilderness contracts covering communications equipment, training for emergency and non-emergency purposes, and a requirement that the contractor develop Absent Without Leave procedures.

The Corrections Branch has drafted, but not implemented, the policies and guidelines for Probation Officers. The wilderness contracts do not contain the clause on communications equipment. However, this area may be covered in revision to the standards. Current wilderness contracts contain a requirement that the contractors develop AWOL procedures.

The Corrections Branch contract requires only that the contractor has a procedure and that it be known to the staff. The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has operational policy and procedures in an Operations Manual covering what staff are to do if a youth walks away from the program. The section of the Operations Manual advises staff on what to do in searching for the youth and advising management, Corrections Branch staff, and parents that the youth has left the program. It also reminds Program staff that they cannot use force in restraining the youth. They can only try to convince the youth to continue on the program. However, there is very little guidance to contractors about youths attempting to leave the programs. The manual does not address the issue of what to do if a youth makes repeated attempts to leave the program.

In the case of the Anvil Island out-trip, the two thirteen year old youths had made two prior attempts to leave the program. They had walked away as recently as the Friday morning of the out-trip. Maple Ridge Wilderness Program staff were unaware that the missing youth had obtained a small amount of money - approximately $16 and some McDonald's coupons. We were advised by the other youths on the out-trip that the missing youth had also taken an extra pair of pants with him on the out-trip. The two thirteen year olds were clearly determined to walk away from the program.

Program operators approach youth trying to leave the program in different ways. Maple Ridge Wilderness Program is quite tenacious in trying to keep youth on the program. Some other program operators recognize early on that youths continually attempting to leave the program pose a risk to themselves, the group leaders, and other members of the group. Very early in the program, these group leaders discuss continued participation with the youth. If the youth does not want to continue, then they arrange for the youth to safely return home.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corrections Branch should develop and distribute provincial policy to guide contractors in the treatment of youths who are determined to leave wilderness programs. These should assist contractors in good decision making in balancing retaining youth on the program versus minimizing the risk to instructors and other participants.

The Corrections Branch should also implement the draft policy improving the guidance to Probation Officers.

4.3 Program Changes

The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program delegates a significant amount of authority to their senior instructors. There is usually one senior instructor in camp, with an instructor assigned to each group of youths. The senior instructor has authority to modify programs, call in assistance if required, or call for search and rescue if a group is overdue or encounters an emergency.

On Friday afternoon, there is a shift changeover meeting in which the performance of individuals is discussed, for the benefit of the youths and the instructor joining the group. On Friday, January 26, 1996, the group discussed the fact that two youths had tried to walk away from the program that morning, and one of those youths had difficulty following direction that day.

The youths involved in the Anvil Island incident were originally scheduled for a hiking/camping trip on this weekend. The senior instructor, on Friday afternoon before leaving the camp, suggested that the program be changed to a canoe trip. Two of the youths had sore knees and one youth had both a sore knee and a sore ankle. The instructors were also aware that one youth was resisting following

direction, and he and another youth were discussing walking away from the program. The instructors' thoughts were that the youths were less likely to try to leave the program if they were on an island.

During the shift change, the issues were discussed with the instructor assigned to the group for the weekend and he agreed with the change in plan and agreed with taking the youths who were contemplating leaving the program. The instructor proceeded to make preparations for the outing.

Within this group of seven youths, one had completed the formal canoe training at Maple Ridge Wilderness Program, and one other youth had some recreational canoeing experience. Some of the group were non-swimmers. In preparing for the outing, the instructors did not ensure that the group had completed their canoe orientation course, nor did they give the group dry land orientation to canoeing. The group was given their orientation course while paddling along the side of Howe Sound.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program holds its instructors accountable for making good decisions. If the senior instructors are going to be empowered to make program changes, they should be held accountable for ensuring that there are adequate preparations for the trip and that the youths receive the appropriate training prior to out-trips.

4.4 Compliance With Standards for Leaders

The Manual of Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities, at section 1.06, page 18, indicates that the minimum staff /participant ratio for stationary camps as 1:6. This is the same ratio that is used by the Branch in open custody centres for youths. With a senior instructor in camp, and an instructor assigned to each group, Maple Ridge Wilderness Program substantially complies with this standard.

As well, the Manual of Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities, at page 71, requires that for wilderness expeditions or out-trips there should be a minimum leader/participant ratio of 2:10, with no fewer than two leaders on any trip. On the Anvil Island out-trip, Maple Ridge Wilderness Program provided one leader to seven youths.

On April 4, 1992, the Contract Administrator wrote to the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program acknowledging that they normally have an instructor/participant ratio of 1:8 on out-trips. The Contract Administrator, replying on behalf of the District Director, advises that this was an historical ratio notwithstanding the clause in the contract requiring that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities.

In early 1994 the contract was tendered. The District Director involved with the contract renewal was not in the position at the time of the 1992 correspondence. He advised us that in discussing the possible contract with representatives of Maple Ridge Wilderness Program, he was very clear that the Program was expected to comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities. The current contract contains a clause that the contractor will comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities. The representative of Maple Ridge Wilderness Programs confirms that the leadership issue was not specifically discussed during contract negotiations. We conclude that there has been some tacit approval of the Program's non-compliance with the standard respecting the number of leaders, up to the point of negotiation and signing of new contract.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program complies with standards governing the participant/leadership ratios on out-trips.

The Corrections Branch should also ensure that Contract Administrators understand that requests for exemption from policies or standards require the approval of the Assistant Deputy Minister, Corrections Branch.

4.5 Contingency Planning

The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program complies with the out-trip planning requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities. However, the standards require some strengthening, as do the procedures followed by the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program.

Maple Ridge Wilderness Program uses a "Route Card" to record the planning, supplies and equipment taken on the out-trip. The Route Card completed by the instructor and reviewed and authorized by the senior instructor does not contain a reminder/confirmation that the weather has been checked for the duration of the trip. In the case of the Anvil Island outing, neither the instructor nor the Senior instructor checked that the weather forecast was favorable for the trip. The conditions were clear, calm, with a cloudless sky when the group left the Porteau Cove Camp at approximately 6 p.m. on Friday, January 26, 1996. However, on Friday night the 4:45 p.m. forecast for the next three days called for low temperatures for the coast (0° C to -15° C) and outflow winds ranging from 20 km/hr to 47 km/hr. In these conditions there was no assurance that the group would be able to return to camp on Sunday afternoon.

As well, the Route Card lists what types of food have been taken as emergency supplies, but not the quantity. We were advised that the Anvil Island out-trip only had emergency food supplies for two meals for each of the participants.

The Route Card completed for the Anvil Island trip identified hypothermia and storms as hazards for the trip. It also listed "going to shore" as the escape feature of the route. Certainly the Coast Guard or a Search and Rescue team are the ultimate resources in an emergency. However, the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program should develop contingency plans for emergencies that do not rely on publicly funded emergency services.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program amends the Route Card to provide for checking of the weather and recording quantities of emergency food. The Contract Administrator should also ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program amend their procedures to require that the instructor and senior instructor complete the Escape Features of the Route Card and develop procedures for recovery of groups that do not totally rely upon publicly funded emergency services.

4.6 Trip Plan

The back of the Route Card shows the meal planning for the trip. It lists the menu for each of the meals planned for the out-trip. However, the Route Card does not list the quantity of food taken on the out-trip so that the senior instructor and management of Maple Ridge Wilderness Program can verify compliance with the standard requiring that each youth be provided with at least 5,000 calories per day.

For group equipment, the Route Card indicates that the equipment list should be completed showing the number of items taken, where appropriate. For the Anvil Island out-trip, under the item called flares, the Route Card indicates a check mark instead of the number of flares. A note on the card indicates that the senior instructor had gotten the flares for the instructor. However, we later learned that the instructor was only given one flare.

The Route Card did not indicate a communication plan or a back-up communication plan. The instructor and senior instructor had agreed to a cellular telephone call when the group was approximately half way to the island. During this call, the instructor and senior instructor had agreed to another call when the group was settled on Anvil Island. In each case, the communication plan did not extend beyond the next call, and there was no plan of action if a call was missed. The Coast Guard recommend that the communication plan include calls in the morning and at night. The Coast Guard also recommends that calls be placed when leaving one island for another. In this way, if the party goes missing, the Coast Guard can accurately compute drift and tide action to assist in searches.

We are advised that within Maple Ridge Wilderness Program it is the senior instructor's responsibility to check the appropriateness of the equipment and supplies for the out-trip. However, the Route Card does not have a signature line for the senior instructor to certify that the equipment, supplies, route and contingency plan have been reviewed with the instructor, the weather checked, there is compliance with standards and guidelines, and the out-trip approved by the senior instructor.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program amend their Route Card format and procedures to ensure that management can verify compliance with standards and that the senior instructors have reviewed and approved the trip plans. As well, Maple Ridge Wilderness Program should ensure that trip plans include a communications plan so that the senior instructors and the instructors understand what to do if a call is missed.

4.7 Orientation - Emergency Services

In our discussions with the instructors and senior instructors at Maple Ridge Wilderness Program, we noted that they do not all have the same orientation and understanding of emergency services on Anvil Island. The instructor on the Anvil Island out-trip and some other long term employees did not realize that there was a caretaker at Camp Daybreak who has a marine telephone and would be able to get a message back to Porteau Cove Camp.

The instructors and senior instructors are not all familiar with the details of the Dunlop-Beaufort Life Raft. One of the senior instructors advised us that a sea anchor was deployed when the life raft was inflated. We verified this fact with the Vancouver distributor. The deployed sea anchor would make it difficult to paddle any distance in the life raft. If the instructor was aware of this fact, he may have taken the time to call into camp before rushing out to rescue the two boys in the life raft.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has a procedure in place to familiarize all of its staff on local emergency services. This familiarization should include the equipment provided by Maple Ridge Wilderness Program and the facilities available at the out-trip destinations.

4.8 Compliance with Coast Guard Regulations

The Voyageur Canoe used on the Anvil Island out-trip was equipped with lights at the bow and the stern, had two bailers on board and each youth was equipped with a personal floatation device and a whistle. The canoe is 27 feet long. Coast Guard regulations require that vessels more than 8 metres in length (approximately 26.26 feet) require one bailer and one manual bilge pump, and twelve approved distress flares of mixed types. The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program canoe had bailers but did not have the required number of flares, nor did it have a manual bilge pump.

We examined the remaining flare at the Porteau Camp. It had a manufacture date of February 1983, and did not show an expiry date. Coast Guard regulations indicate that flares are only valid for four years from the date of manufacture as marked on the flares. The instructor on the Anvil Island out-trip advised us that he had one flare which did not function properly when he used it.

In discussing these matters with the Coast Guard, they have offered other suggestions to improve safety. The Coast Guard recommends that the program review night time crossing of open water in Howe Sound. Their concern relates to the number of commercial and pleasure craft using Howe Sound after dark, and whether the larger craft will see an open canoe in the dark, even though it has bow and stern lighting. They also strongly recommend that for open water crossings the program should have a shepherd boat. This boat can be unobtrusive, but near enough to assist, if assistance is required. The program can either acquire a boat or try to arrange for the service from the Coast Guard Auxiliary from neighboring islands that may be on training cruises on Howe Sound.

Although the instructor had a cellular telephone in a waterproof covering, the Coast Guard recommend a marine VHF radio that will offer the advantage of direct communication, 24 hours a day, to emergency services, communication to the base camp, and access to current weather forecasts at any time of the day. We are advised that waterproof models are available at approximately the same cost as a good cellular telephone.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program canoe program complies with Coast Guard Regulations for small craft. The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program is encouraged to discuss additional safety processes with the Coast Guard. In reviewing the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities, the Corrections Branch should review whether or not there are sufficient safety precautions for night time crossing of open waters.

4.9 Equipment

We reviewed the equipment provided to the youth and the equipment carried by the instructors. For the Anvil Island out-trip, each of the youths was personally well equipped for the outing. Prior to leaving on the out-trip, the instructor reviewed the equipment and ensured that each youth had sufficient warm clothing for the trip. The youths were equipped with long underwear, fleece clothing, mitts and rain gear. They were provided with individual sleeping bags, ensolite mattresses and the group was using ground tarps and sleeping under a group tarp.

In the Standards section of this report we have recommended that the standards be strengthened so that groups will be limited to out-trips where the forecasted ambient temperature is less than or equal to the ratings on sleeping equipment.

Groups on out-trips should also be able to monitor the weather forecast so they can adjust their trip plan accordingly. We are advised that there are very modestly priced radio receivers available that will allow users to monitor weather forecasts in most areas of the province.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program acquires and provides weather monitoring radios to instructors on wilderness expeditions.

4.10 Duty Manager - Maple Ridge Wilderness Program

Maple Ridge Wilderness Program have impressed upon us that they empower their senior instructors with authority for decision making in operational matters. At the same time, the senior instructors operate on a consultative basis. When the group on Anvil Island did not call on Saturday morning, as arranged, the senior instructor placed calls to other off-duty senior instructors and the Program Director within Maple Ridge Wilderness Program. There was some delay before any of these calls were returned. We were advised that the Program Director was on an airplane returning to the Lower Mainland during the critical time of these calls. Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has one Program Director who has both a pager and a cellular telephone. When this Director is away, he arranges for another employee to cover, but this employee does not have a pager.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has a system of an "on call" manager at all times. This manager should be available for a person-to-person discussion of events or incidents.

4.11 Communications About the Incident

Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has a section in their Operations Manual on emergency response which includes instructions on communicating with the involved parties. A photocopy of this section of the manual is also prominently displayed above the telephone at the Porteau Cove Camp.

When the group on Anvil Island was overdue, according to procedures, at approximately 4:30 p.m. on Sunday the senior instructor called the Coast Guard for assistance and the RCMP. The senior instructor also attempted to call more senior

management within the program. Although the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program Operations Manual requires that the Corrections Branch Contract Administrator be contacted, this was not done. In fairness to the staff of the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program, they have instructions to contact the Contract Administrator, but do not have names and telephone numbers for Corrections Branch contacts.

When the second senior instructor arrived at 6:30 p.m. he called the youths' parents to advise them that the youths were overdue from a camping trip and called the instructor's parents to advise them that the group was overdue.

When the Coast Guard returned the group to Lions Bay marina, the media had become aware of the incident. The media met the group at Lions Bay marina, and interviewed some of the youths. We recognize that the media have a role to play in public accountability. However, the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program and the media have a responsibility under the *Young Offenders Act* to protect the identity of young offenders.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program is provided with names and telephone numbers for Corrections Branch contacts. The Contract Administrator should also ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program emergency response procedures include contact names and telephone numbers for Corrections Branch contacts and emphasizes with the senior instructors that Corrections Branch officials should receive early advice of critical incidents. The Contract Administrator should also reinforce with Maple Ridge Wilderness Program the necessity for early notification to parents and guardians where their children may be involved in an incident.

The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has procedures in place to protect young offenders from inadvertent identification by the media.

4.12 Contract Administration

Staff transfers have resulted in a change in management of the Maple Ridge Probation and Family Court Services office. The new manager has not had the opportunity to establish a close working relationship with the senior managers of the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program. This has resulted in less liaison on youth referred to the program and a lessened understanding of the challenges faced by the program and its compliance with standards and policies.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Local Director of the Maple Ridge Probation and Family Court Services office should establish a working relationship with the senior management of the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program.

APPENDIX A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Branch should review and revise the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities. In revising the standards, the Correction Branch should ensure that the language used clearly indicates where compliance is expected and where discretion can be applied. The revised standards should clearly discriminate between activities and out trips.

4.2 The Corrections Branch should develop and distribute provincial policy to guide contractors in the treatment of youths who are determined to leave wilderness programs. These should assist contractors in good decision making in balancing retaining youth on the program versus minimizing the risk to instructors and other participants.

The Corrections Branch should also implement the draft policy improving the guidance to Probation Officers.

4.3 The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program holds its instructors accountable for making good decisions. If the senior instructors are going to be empowered to make program changes, they should be held accountable for ensuring that there are adequate preparations for the trip and that the youths receive the appropriate training prior to out-trips.

4.4 The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program complies with standards governing the participant/leadership ratios on out-trips.

The Corrections Branch should also ensure that Contract Administrators understand that requests for exemption from policies or standards require the approval of the Assistant Deputy Minister, Corrections Branch.

4.5 The Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program amends the Route Card to provide for checking of the weather and recording quantities of emergency food. The Contract Administrator should also ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program amend their procedures to require that the instructor and senior instructor complete the Escape Features of the Route Card and develop procedures for recovery of groups that do not totally rely upon publicly funded emergency services.

4.6 The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program amend their Route Card format and procedures to ensure that management can verify compliance with standards and that the senior instructors have reviewed and approved the trip plans. As well, Maple Ridge Wilderness Program should ensure that trip plans include a communications plan so that the senior instructors and the instructors understand what to do if a call is missed.

4.7 The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has a procedure in place to familiarize all of its staff on local emergency services. This familiarization should include the equipment provided by Maple Ridge Wilderness Program and the facilities available at the out-trip destinations.

4.8 The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program canoe program complies with Coast Guard Regulations for small craft. The Maple Ridge Wilderness Program is encouraged to discuss additional safety processes with the Coast Guard. In reviewing the Standards and Guidelines for Wilderness Programs and Outdoor Activities, the Corrections Branch should review whether or not there are sufficient safety precautions for night time crossing of open waters.

4.9 The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program acquires and provides weather monitoring radios to instructors on wilderness expeditions.

4.10 **The Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program has a system of an "on call" manager at all times. This manager should be available for a person-to-person discussion of events or incidents.**

4.11 **The Corrections Branch Contract Administrator should ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program is provided with names and telephone numbers for Corrections Branch contacts. The Contract Administrator should also ensure that Maple Ridge Wilderness Program emergency response procedures include contact names and telephone numbers for Corrections Branch contacts and emphasizes with the senior instructors that Corrections Branch officials should receive early advice of critical incidents. The Contract Administrator should also reinforce with Maple Ridge Wilderness Program the necessity for early notification to parents and guardians where their children may be involved in an incident.**

4.12 **The Local Director of the Maple Ridge Probation and Family Court Services office should establish a working relationship with the senior management of the Maple Ridge Wilderness Program.**